WHAT'S DIFFERENT IN THE COSMERE® RPG?

Familiar with d20-based roleplaying games? Then you're ready to jump into the Cosmere RPG! This quick overview is not a comprehensive list of mechanics. Instead, it highlights key distinctions and features of interest in the Cosmere RPG system. To learn more about a particular topic, consult the Stormlight Handbook (SHB) *pages cited below.*

A New Way to Roll

Like most d20-based systems, the core mechanic of the Cosmere RPG is a d20 skill test. However, the Cosmere RPG builds upon this familiar foundation in exciting new ways, including the following:

The Plot Die. The addition of the plot die—a special narrative die—adds dimension and flair to certain skill tests.

Drop It Like It's Hot. All dice for a skill test are rolled at the same time. This always includes a d20 and sometimes includes the plot die, damage dice, and duplicate dice for advantages and disadvantages.

The Plot Die

The Cosmere RPG uses a standard array of polyhedral dice (d4, d6, d8, d10, d12, d20) and a custom d6 called the plot die. This special die comes into play when a character attempts something risky or especially consequential.

SAMI RYTKÖNEN

When the GM prompts a player to raise the stakes, that player adds the plot die to their d20 skill test. About a third of skill tests during a game should be made with raised stakes.

The plot die has the following faces:

Opportunities (◈) and Complications (✹) add exciting plot twists, offering players and GMs a memorable way to enhance the narrative during gameplay. For more details, see *SHB* pages 8–9.

Advantages and Disadvantages

An advantage or disadvantage (*SHB* page 58) can be applied to any single die before it is rolled: the d20 in a test, the plot die, or a damage die. If you have multiple advantages, you apply them to different dice in your roll. The player chooses which die to apply an advantage to. For a disadvantage, the GM decides which die to apply it to.

Expertises

Expertises reflect a character's specialized knowledge in a culture or area of study. A PC with an expertise knows basic related facts without making tests, and gleans extra information from relevant tests they do make.

Weapons and armor don't require proficiencies, but an expertise in a weapon or armor can unlock special traits.

GM Rules Overview v1.02 ©2025 Brotherwise Games, LLC and Dragonsteel LLC.

Character Stats

Physical, Cognitive, and Spiritual are the three categories that divide a character's attributes, skills, resources, and defenses.

Attributes and Skills

The Cosmere RPG features six attributes:

Physical Attributes: Strength and Speed
Cognitive Attributes: Intellect and Willpower
Spiritual Attributes: Awareness and Presence

These attributes correspond to ability scores from similar d20 systems. However, in the Cosmere RPG, your attributes don't have separate "scores" and "modifiers." You simply add your total points in an attribute to your ranks in the applicable skill to get your total skill modifier (before any situational bonuses or penalties).

Health, Focus, and Investiture

Characters have three resource pools (*SHB* page 54):

Health. This physical resource represents your character's stamina and ability to shrug off minor wounds.

Focus. This cognitive resource represents mental resolve and the ability to resist distraction. Most reactions and many talents require focus.

Investiture. Most characters with magic abilities can also spend a spiritual resource called Investiture to power those abilities.

Defenses

Not all attacks leave tangible wounds. Instead of a single "Armor Class," characters have three defenses that represent their Physical, Cognitive, and Spiritual well-being:

Physical defense. Characters use their Physical defense (10 + Strength + Speed) to block or decrease the effectiveness of incoming attacks.

Cognitive defense. Characters rely on their Cognitive defense (10 + Intellect + Willpower) to avoid attacks meant to trick, confuse, or break their focus.

Spiritual defense. Characters use their Spiritual defense (10 + Awareness + Presence) to resist the effects of social manipulation and Invested attacks.

Three Scene Types

The Cosmere RPG features three scene types (*SHB* page 289), which gives every PC a chance to shine:

Combats. Tightly paced scenes that pit PCs against NPC adversaries, typically playing out in three or four fast-paced rounds.

Conversations. Social scenes that take place when PCs attempt to influence NPCs, in which characters can make tests and spend focus to exert and resist influence.

Endeavors. Skill-based scenes in which characters work together to meet a success threshold. Endeavors can be highly focused, like a chase scene, or they can be "montage" scenes that take place over a longer period of time.

In the downtime between scenes, characters can engage in personal pursuits, earn income, recuperate from injuries, or respec through self-reflection.

Dynamic Combat

The Cosmere RPG innovates on classic d20-based battle mechanics to deliver fast-paced, character-driven combat scenes.

Combat Turn Order

At the beginning of each round of combat, players choose whether to take a fast turn or a slow turn (*SHB* page 301). The combat scene proceeds using the following structure:

Fast Turns. PCs taking fast turns take them in any order they choose, each gaining two actions (▶▶).

Fast NPC Turns. NPCs taking fast turns take them in any order the GM chooses, each gaining two actions.

Slow PC Turns. The remaining PCs take slow turns in any order they choose, each gaining three actions (▶▶▶).

Slow NPC Turns. The remaining NPCs take slow turns, each gaining three actions.

Each character can also take one reaction (⮌) per turn. NPCs who are Boss adversaries can take both a fast turn and a slow turn each round.

Attack Tests

Attack tests are made using a skill, such as Heavy Weaponry. To succeed, the test result must meet or exceed the target's relevant defense. When an attack hits, add the skill modifier of the skill used to make the attack to the damage dice to calculate the total damage dealt.

Grazing

If you miss, you can still spend 1 focus to graze, dealing damage equal to the total rolled on the damage dice (without your skill modifier added).

Critical Hits

A natural 20 on the d20 used to make an attack test always generates an Opportunity (◈), which can be used to deal a critical hit (if a player chooses to spend it this way). On a critical hit, treat all damage dice for that attack as if they rolled their highest number.

Deflect

Armor and carapace can protect a character from taking the full amount of impact, keen, or energy damage dealt by an attack. It can also reduce the potential severity of most injuries.

Equipment Traits

Weapons and armor have traits that give them special characteristics. For example, a weapon with Momentum grants an advantage on attacks if you have moved at least 10 feet in that turn, while a weapon with the Deadly trait allows you to spend an Opportunity to inflict a devastating injury.

STEVE PRESCOTT

Injuries

If a character is reduced to 0 health, or if they take a critical hit from a weapon with the deadly trait, they suffer an injury (see *SHB* page 296).

Recovery

During a short rest, players can roll the recovery die, regaining that much health and/or focus. The type of die used is determined by a character's Willpower. Once per scene, a character can take the Recover action (▶▶) to roll the recovery die.

Rewards

Rewards in the Cosmere RPG fill a similar function to powerful loot in other fantasy RPGs. These are earned by progressing personal goals during gameplay. Rewards may take the form of a Shardblade or fabrial, but can also be powerful patrons, loyal squires, noble titles, and bonds with Radiant spren.

Talents and Progression

Instead of traditional classes, the Cosmere RPG features flexible paths consisting of talent trees. The six heroic paths are Agent, Envoy, Hunter, Leader, Scholar, and Warrior. There are also nine playable Radiant paths, which grant Investiture and the power to wield surges.

Each time a character gains a level or enters a new tier, they can choose a talent in a path of their choice. Through multipathing, players can build characters as complex and nuanced as the heroes of Brandon Sanderson's novels.

TAKE THE NEXT STEP!

STORMLIGHT™
WORLD GUIDE
A Lore Compendium and Art Book for Brandon Sanderson's The Stormlight Archive®
COSMERE® RPG · STORMLIGHT™ HANDBOOK
STORMLIGHT™
HANDBOOK
Tabletop Roleplaying in the World of Brandon Sanderson's The Stormlight Archive®
STONEWALKERS™
Aid the Heralds in this Stormlight™ Adventure for the Cosmere® Roleplaying Game

Swearing the First Ideal is just the beginning of your adventures in Roshar! When you're ready to level up, you can find comprehensive game rules in the *Stormlight™ Handbook*, expand your game with the lore and adversaries in the *Stormlight™ World Guide*, or embark on a new quest with the *Stonewalkers™* campaign-length adventure.

STORMLIGHT™
CAMPAIGN SETTING

DRAGONSTEEL®

BROTHERWISE GAMES